

Written Testimony HB 06659, Governor's Biennium Budget – Concerning Funding for Early Voting

14 February 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Ranking Members Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I submit this testimony as a strong proponent of early voting. On November 8, 2022, I cast my ballot in favor of amending the Connecticut's Constitution to allow for early voting. I am delighted that this referendum passed so our state can rightly take its place alongside the 49 other states that permit some form of early voting. The ability to vote early and in-person creates opportunities for eligible voters, like those who work unusual hours and cannot make it to the polls on Election Day, to exercise their franchise. The hard work of developing an early voting program now lies with our General Assembly.

Legislators carry the responsibility for crafting the elements of this very important initiative that will be an unfunded mandate if the proposed budget by Governor Lamont is not changed to add funding for development and continued implementation of early voting in Connecticut. I urge you to either amend or outright oppose HB 06659 for the singular reason that funds for early voting are missing from it.

How can we promise the people of Connecticut a chance to expand access to the ballot if our government is unwilling to support the program with financing? Connecticut's 169 towns cannot be expected to pay for this new program with extensive costs covering everything from adding staff, security, site support, voting machines, training, and education. In my view, Connecticut will miss a golden opportunity to enhance democracy in our state because the governor's budget is blind sighted to this possibility.

Sincerely,

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